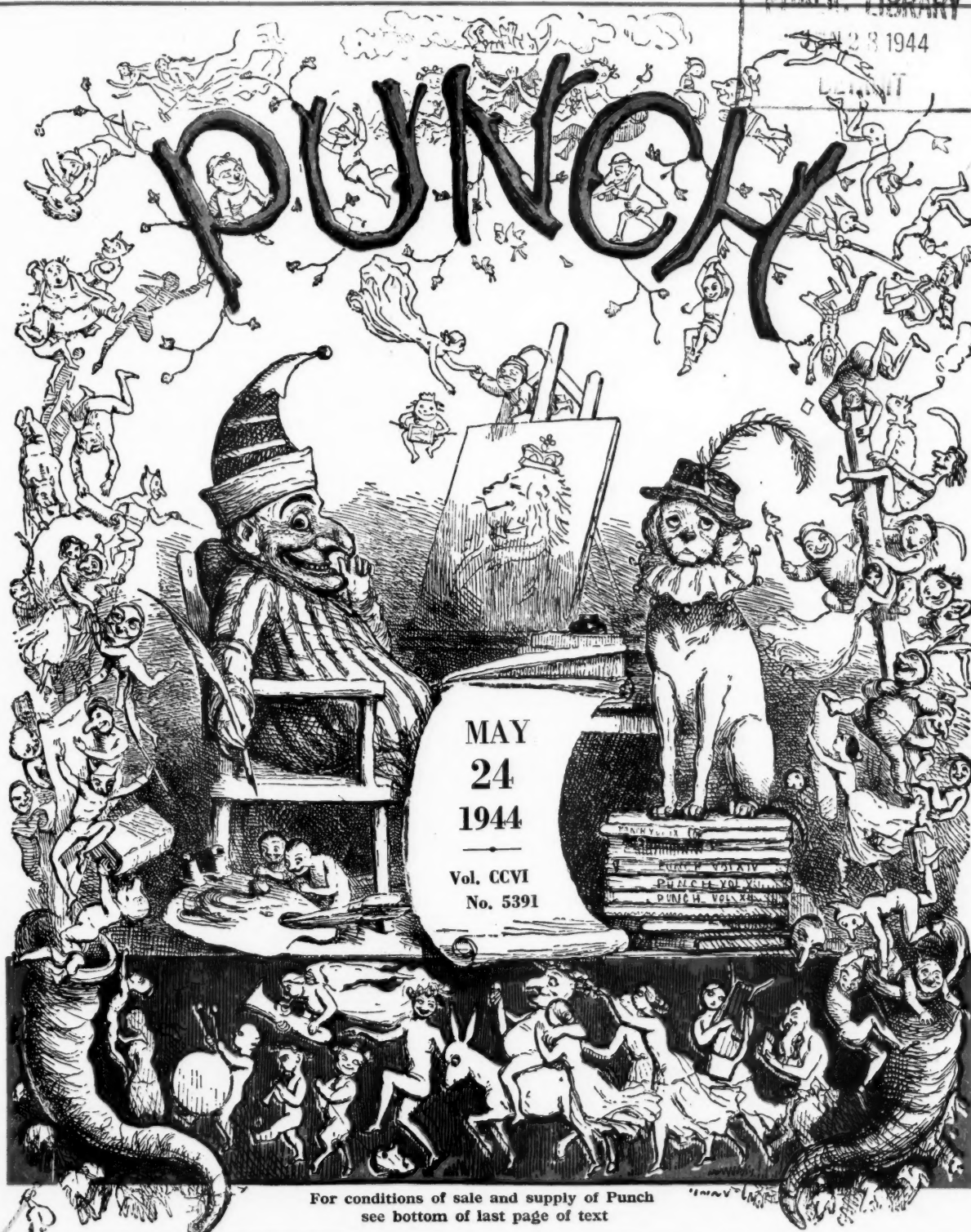


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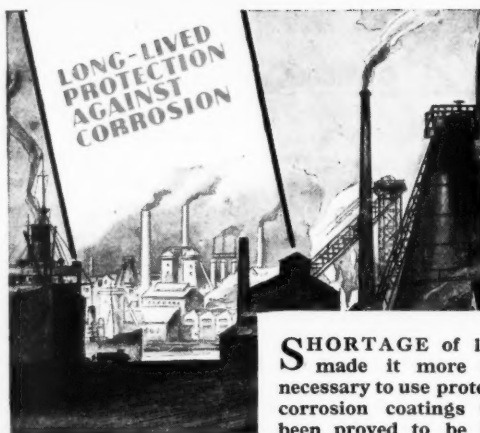


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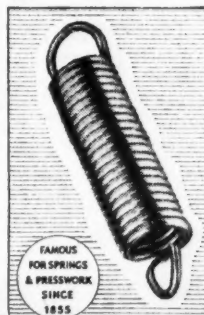


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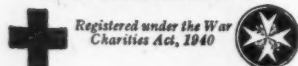
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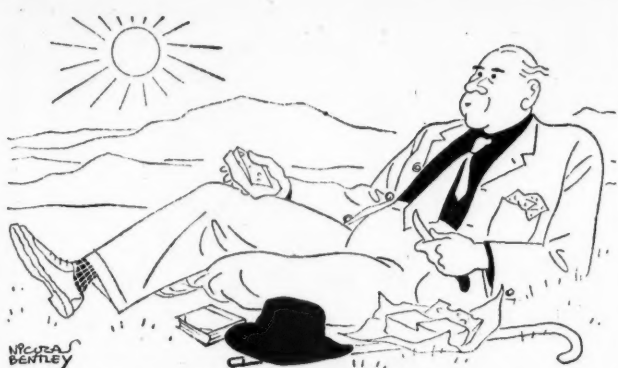
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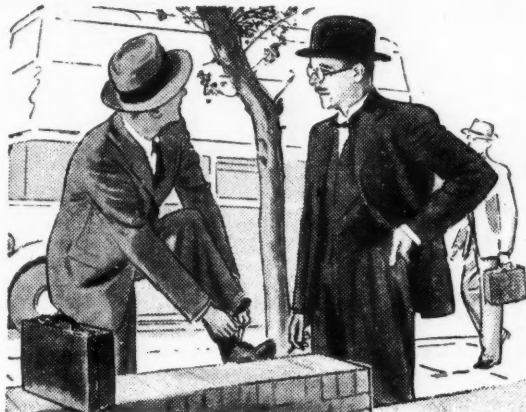
MR. HILLAND DALE was a man of the open air. He read Borrow and Belloc and had been heard to observe that the finest meal in the world was bread and cheese under the open sky . . . This remark has not been heard from him lately; not, we understand, since a violent rainstorm drove him for his lunch to an inn where a perspicacious Mine Host had the happy habit of serving Pan Yan—that spicy-sweet pickle—whenever he served bread and cheese.

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These days it's not
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wants!*

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you find it? The man who could advise you best is busy designing tank and aero engines. He knows every make of filter inside and out and he's very hard to please. He's been our task-master for some time, that's why we know so much about him. Anyway, his advice would be valuable — if you can get it — take it.

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says OLD HETHERS

"But you don't have to go without, do as I do—make it from Robinson's 'Patent' Barley. You'll find full directions on the tin. If you can't get hold of a lemon or an orange, flavour with the juice of stewed or tinned fruits, or maybe you've some ideas of your own."

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ROBINSON'S
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THE LONDON CHARIVARI



Vol. CCVI No. 5391

May 24 1944

Charivaria

THE General Election in Eire will have world-shaking repercussions. It may be followed by a change of government in Bolivia.

A man fainted in a London auction-room where brandy was being sold at £10 a bottle, but to no avail.

There is a possibility that the countryside may not be so well wooded after the war. Somebody has suggested plastic hoardings.

Hitler is reported to have said that he will resign as soon as the German people have no more use for him. His only problem now is how to make the retirement retrospective.



"SEA-AIR BLOWS AT 3 ENEMY BASES"
Heading in "Daily Telegraph."
Invigorating, what?

No one may volunteer as a blood donor in Germany. Persons who have the commodity receive a writ of *habeas corpus*.

It was revealed in court that a moneylender had been approached by a boy of fourteen. The little lad probably wanted to raise a mortgage on some of his obsolete toys.

With reference to a recent controversy it is only fair to say that laundries are generous. They think nothing of giving the shirt off your back to somebody else.



A meteorologist declares that on the whole the war-time summers have been exceptionally dry. Now who says county cricket didn't make any difference?

Dining by candlelight is popular. Under rose-coloured shades, Icelandic cod with cucumber sometimes successfully masquerades as salmon.

It is said that table shelters will be collected in soon after the war. Householders who have been persuaded to let them will just have to tell the families concerned to find alternative accommodation.

In non-English-speaking countries a Hollywood film company is to publish its stories in Basic English. There will also be shorter versions in non-English.

In view of the general shortages we are being urged to bath in five inches of cold water. The really staunch patriot will go one better than that: he will give up taking cold baths altogether.

A criminal was identified by his pre-war passport photograph. As a result of war worry he had grown to resemble it.



"To LET, two well furnished rooms for a moderate rent to suitable tenants; no attendance; no stamped envelopes."
Advt. in *Yorks paper*.

No blotting-paper either, for a moderate rent.

Owing to a bitterly cold wind on the East Coast the other week two footballers had to receive medical treatment during the first few minutes of the game. That'll teach them to play Soccer in the cricket season.

The Gambler

I SHALL name him Bahram, because Bahram was a famous hunter of the wild ass. FitzGerald does not say so in his poem, but the original does. For many years I had supposed that the picture of the wild ass stamping on Bahram's grave was merely intended to convey the idea of desolation and ruined palaces. I had thought of Bahram as a man who hunted lions or hippogriffs and rode on an elephant.

But the lines should really go—

Bahram who was always catching wild asses
To-day behold the grave has caught Bahram,

which is not so beautiful.

"Ha! ha!" (in effect) says the wild ass, "where is the old fellow who hunted me now?" Many of the *Rubáiyát* are disappointing in the original, especially the one that ought to have been translated—

If a loaf of wheaten bread be forthcoming,
A gourd of wine, and a thigh-bone of mutton,
And then, if thou and I be sitting in the wilderness
That were a joy not within the power of any Sultan.

This would seem to present Omar as less of a hard-drinking philosopher and more of a food profiteer.

But I stray from the subject. My Bahram bets. He bets on the war. And he nearly always wins. He has been betting since Dunkirk. I should not like to tell you how many hundreds of pounds he has made since the summer of 1940, beginning with the wager that the Germans would not invade this island, against which he was giving (rather rashly?) three to one.

Rightly, at any rate, he points out that the present rate of income tax makes England a paradise for the successful gambler, and if one only bets against pessimists, one is

doing exactly the same work as an ordinary insurance company, and also helping to sustain public morale.

The simplest bet of course that Bahram makes can be put in the words "The siren shall not sound to-night," and after giving odds of fifty or even a hundred to one against it, he has made a very good thing out of irritable or faint-hearted fire-watchers; and if you think he lost heavily during the summer and winter of 1940, or even during later periods, you are wrong.

For he did not so frame his bets at such times. "Forty to one against a bomb falling within a hundred yards of this building" was one of his most profitable investments, and the takers, as he is never tired of telling me, really were wild asses, because of the strong probability that if the bomb fell much nearer the bet would be called off.

But he framed his bets in dozens of different ways, taking into account the moon and the weather, the state of the war, and the fears of pessimists. And why, after all, he cries plaintively, should pessimists not be robbed?

Bahram says that he has often made money on the actual width of craters, which caused a great deal of argument and work with a tape-measure before the account was settled, that the Russian victories have been a little gold-mine to him, that he has found people willing to bet on the fall of Cairo, and that anything he has lost on the capture of Rome has been amply covered by his takings on the crash of Mussolini. If I have thought it a little beneath his dignity at times to bet that there would be something on the lunch menu besides rabbit and sausages, I am bound to admit that he rightly lengthened the odds on the restoration of turn-ups to trouser-legs, and the inability of the Japanese to make a landing in Australia. He has given me five to three on the death of Hitler before the Germans ask for an armistice, but that I consider a mere fancy bet, reflecting no credit or discredit on either of us, and perhaps not greatly altering the course of the war.

You have a right to say that he must have shown considerable sagacity in not making wagers over certain calamitous happenings, and that of course is true. He knows when to shut his pocket-book and when to open it, and he has an unbounded contempt for what he chooses to call wild speculation. I have called him a gambler, but he doesn't, in his own opinion, gamble at all. He banks on the certainty that most people are willing to pay a little money if what they fear doesn't come true, and would find some consolation in winning a fair sum of money if it did. Study the chances, he says, choose the right times, the right people, and the right odds, and you become a benefactor to your friends. "I call myself a Private Assurance Agent. And if honours were rightly distributed one should be mine." The odds, it would seem, against a London air raid during the last few weeks have been fantastic, but there are steady takers still.

For some time of course Bahram has been chiefly engaged in what he calls "Invasion dates." Many fools had pet dates, he assures me. If they were not actual dates they were week-ends, and for a month or more he has been making money out of them. What we all want to know is when he will shut up his Invasion Pocket Book. I only know that he refused to do any business on three consecutive week-ends dating from the sixth of June. But he has given huge odds against a very large number of named days stretching far ahead. Surely one of the wild asses will stamp on him at last.

EVOR.



"Message from Sector Captain at 102B—Fire at the haunted house."



SIGNS OF SUMMER

“ . . . Kindly Consented to Reply.”

“YOUR Grace,” I began, “My Lord Mayor, your Bishops, my Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen—pray be seated.”

“No,” said my secretary.

“Why not?” I whispered.

“They are already seated.”

“Freely admitted,” I said, thanking him with a nod, and raising my voice I went on—

“My Grace, your Lord Mayor and others as before. It can well be imagined with what mingled emotions of pride and humility, pride in the great event we commemorate to-day and humility in face of the undeserved honour that has been done me, I rise on this occasion, an occasion which, but for the ties of Empire—I would rather say of free association under a common banner—which bind us into a single entity, those ideals which through the night that has come upon us we pursue together into the reddening streaks of a new dawn, could never have arisen, to address you. As I look round on this set of blackguardly ruffians, men without creed or conscience whose villainies will echo down the corridors of time so long as memory endures—”

“You’ve missed out a page,” said my secretary, nudging me in some agitation.

“No, no,” I said.

“Yes, yes. It’s on the back.”

“On the back of what?”

“It goes on on the back of the page.”

“Ah,” I said. “Both sides of the paper, eh? Quite right in war-time,” and I turned over.

“Sacrilegious scoundrels,” I shouted, “but for whose evil schemings the world might even now—”

“No, no,” cried my secretary, who is inclined to be too easily put out; “not the back of that page—the back of the page you started with.”

“You mean the first page?”

“Yes, yes.”

“I see,” I said, and retrieving the discarded sheet from the floor went smoothly on:

“Your Grace,” I said, “My Lord Mayor, your—”

“That’s the front of it,” interrupted my secretary, almost in tears.

“Of course,” I said, and turned over once more.

“I must apologize,” I said, catching the eye of a smallish bishop, “for this unwarrantable intrusion—I should say, unfortunate interruption. I was saying that as I look round on this assemblage of all that is best and noblest in this dear

country of ours, as I survey peer and prelate, Minister of State and Admiral of the Fleet, sailor and airman, judge, physician, Privy Councillor and Fellow of the Royal Society; when I see, as I do to-day, generals rubbing shoulders with lawyers, and bishops hand in hand with duchesses—all joined together in a common effort, all a part of that great democracy of talent, yes, of honest, kindly, courageous talent, without which Britain and her close-knit family of nations would have floundered and fallen ere this in the paroxysm that now has the world in its grip. When—”

At this point I was again interrupted, this time by a peer of some sort who cried out with extraordinary abruptness, “No verb!”

“How do you mean, sir?” I asked.

“No verb in that last sentence,” he repeated.

“Whose last sentence?” I asked in some bewilderment.

“Yours,” he said.

“I like that,” I said. “You have yourself just made three remarks none of which contained a trace or vestige of a verb of any kind. Those who live in glass houses,” I said, turning the point neatly against him, “should undress in the dark.”

I then resumed my address as follows:

“When I contrast the good men and true who rule our destinies, and the destiny of our friends and Allies, with Hitler and his set of blackguardly ruffians, men without creed or conscience whose villainies will echo down the corridors of time—(Cheers)—so long as memory endures and courage and kindness sit enthroned in the hearts of men, why then confidence and hope flow anew into my breast and I feel, nay, I am sure, that there can be but one outcome of the struggle; that virtue must prevail, that Victory will never rest the sole of her foot within the habitations of those who have set at naught the promptings of Mercy and spurned aside the entreaties of Righteousness and Peace.”

Here, as I attempted to turn a page, the major portion of my notes slipped from my grasp and fell into a bowl of soup.

“This soup should have been cleared away long ago,” I said sternly.

“It’s not soup, it’s your finger-bowl,” my secretary pointed out.

“The same applies,” I said, dismissing the ridiculous quibble. “Take it away.”

“What about your notes?” he persisted.

“Leave them in the bowl,” I said impatiently. “I have the other side of this sheet left. It must suffice.” I then took a sip of water, pulled down the ends of my waistcoat, cleared my throat and turned once more to the company.

“Sacrilegious scoundrels,” I shouted—and paused with, I think, a look of utter astonishment on my face.

“Surely,” I said to my secretary, “I have said that before?”

“Yes,” he said, “but—”

“No ‘but’ about it,” I said. “Have I or have I not said it before?”

“Yes,” he said.

At this point a well-known judge, seeing me temporarily at a loss, very kindly endeavoured to come to my assistance—but for whose evil schemings . . .” he prompted.

“Thank you,” I said coldly, “but I have finished.”

And with that I sat down in a silence relieved only by the sound of splintering glass. No one but a fool, as I said to my secretary afterwards, would have thought of putting the finger-bowl on the seat of my chair. H. F. E.



“That’s the worst of phoning during the quiet period.”

A Good Start

"NOW there's not much motoring you have your chance to practise writing," said the editor of a motoring paper to a new member of his staff. "I'll want you to cover the social side. You'll handle the beauties of Nature and the Roman remains. You'll visit and describe celebrated view-points, and don't forget how well your engine pulled on the way up. You'll go to John o' Groats on Aztec petrol—your engine will run sweetly with never a sign of knock—and to Land's End in a Placard—you will appreciate for the first time the roomy comfort of a modern Placard. I know I can leave the technical side confidently to you, but here are some hints to improve your style.

"Never leave a word alone; that's amateurish. It isn't a climb, it's a severe climb. Better still, a somewhat severe climb. There's a nice touch of diffidence about that. You're not ramming your opinion down your reader's throat. For the same reason, make play with 'as it were.' That takes the offence out of a statement.

"The Cotswolds provide a vantage-point, as it were.' 'The road forks, as it were.' Your reader may think different. You don't do a thing outright: you make an attempt, so to speak. Don't force your opinion down his throat.

"And not too much of the 'I.' I don't know," continued the editor thoughtfully, "whether you could say 'One got out of my car,' but you can and should say 'One may obtain a magnificent view'—or rather, 'a somewhat magnificent view—of the Pentlands.' I have it," he exclaimed. "The traveller, if he cares, may obtain a . . . The enterprising traveller," he cried, inspired, "The—the . . ."

"Somewhat enterprising traveller?"

"The enterprising lover of the Great Outdoors," cried the editor, in full spate. "Be picturesque. '... of the Great Outdoors may obtain a somewhat magnificent view of these justly-famous hills.'" A touch of caution crept into his voice—"... as it were.' See?"

"Now for material. Never pass a plaque. Keep a look-out for tombstones. My old chief used to say 'Where there's a stone there's a story.' Our readers like a funny epitaph or an inn-sign said to be unique. Do it this way. 'After a run down'—no, 'after a well-deserved run down,' that's the human touch—our Placard drew up smoothly

opposite a fine old byre. Here the curious may discern a tablet securely let into the wall commemorating the last squire to shoot deer with a blunderbuss. This is reputed to be the only one of its kind in the vicinity, and will serve to remind the speculative traveller of how far modern progress has carried us.' You'd better explain that. 'Nowadays, we no longer use a blunderbuss and deer are comparatively few and far between.'"

"As it were."

"No," said the editor, "you might risk that.

"Work in your technical touches deftly. 'A single gallon of petrol will take you to the spot where Sir Thomas More was burned at the stake.' 'Over these rough roads, where harsh braking should be avoided at all costs for your tyres' sake, Lady Jane Grey was dragged to execution,' or it may have been John Knox. Verify. Some of these historical people had a nasty habit of dying in their beds.

"Don't be too learned, though. Keep it simple, like this. 'The traveller in search of a really satisfying repast might do worse than pull in at one of those grand old English hostleries and sample the fare of the house. They might be prevailed upon to regale him, as we were, with a generous slice of ham and half a dozen appetizing eggs. In our case, we had scarcely started to commence our collation before a clatter in the yard heralded the approach of a belt-driven, side-valve, double-declutched Trudge Eagle. The door opened and there was Mr. Atkinson, that veteran roadster and confirmed motor-cyclist, spattered with mud, and his wife, Mrs. Atkinson.'"

"That's the kind of thing. Homely, intimate. Vivid expression, interesting topics, casual technical detail. Do you think you can do that?"

"I will make an attempt, so to speak," replied the new man spiritedly.

Pringle-Watt Rides Side-Saddle.

THERE must be more cycle thieves in Megthorpe (per thousand of population) than in any other town in England. Pringle-Watt, I believe, has it all worked out with graphs to show the incidence of theft for every thoroughfare—and Pringle-Watt ought to know. For about six

months St. Morbid's watched the town's struggle to safeguard its cycles with sympathetic interest. The school itself had a clear record. The cycle-shed, unlocked day and night, represented Trust triumphant in a naughty world. It was not only that we masters regarded security measures as distasteful and a bad example for the boys, but that we foresaw the inconvenience which such precautions would cause. There is (and always has been) great rivalry among the boys of St. Morbid's on the question of whose cycle is most often borrowed by which master. That was a tradition we had no wish to upset.

It was in December 1942 that Biggot's cycle was stolen. It was removed in broad daylight from the entrance to the chemi-lab. The incident aroused considerable discussion in the staff-room. Some disapproved of any change in our general attitude, but favoured a whip-round to restore Biggot's finances. Others, led by Pringle-Watt, wanted action and advocated the compulsory locking of all cycles and the setting up of a cycle-watching committee.

Before any decision was reached another cycle was stolen. One afternoon Pringle-Watt found two spokes, a carrier and a cycle-lock where his 3-speed "Comet" had been only an hour before. That it was Pringle-Watt's cycle and that its departure was so violent were facts that made us all sit up. Everyone became convinced overnight of the need for the strictest measures of security. Everyone, that is, with the exception of Pringle-Watt. With some logic he argued that the locking of cycles had proved futile; that we must accept a state of public morality beyond our control and pool our resources so that the unfortunate victims among us should not suffer disproportionate financial loss. The majority for once had its way.

Pringle-Watt turned out next day on his wife's cycle. It was a foolish gesture. Between Hamilton Place and St. Morbid's he was stopped three times by policemen and harried by successive bands of suspicious children. For a week Pringle-Watt spent most of his time ruining his relations with the local constabulary. His native arrogance, amplified enormously by his material loss and repeated indignities, led him into serious trouble. Only the Head's tactful intervention kept him in circulation.

Pringle-Watt's attitude is still defiant and unreasonable. At lunch to-day he wanted to know what was the maximum punishment for one found guilty of masquerading as a woman.



"... and for wilfully ignoring the traffic lights in the High Street."

Holiday Resort

THE desert, it appears to me,
Is not to be preferred even to Frinton-on-Sea—
That resort of the respectable bourgeoisie
Who spend their days playing golf and bridge and
drinking tea.

It is NOT repeat NOT to be confused with Clacton
Whose beach proletarians are closely packed on.
And the miles upon miles of glittering sands
Where lovers can sit and hold hands,
Lavishly provided under the ægis
Of the Town Council of Bognor Regis,
Might suggest a fictitious comparison:
With this Place where—officially—a war is on.

BUT
The desert's not so,
Although
A casual glance at it might give you ideas about
Blackpool when the tide is out.
Tents,
Stench
(For, without wishing to appear rude,
The sanitary arrangements are somewhat crude),
Hosts of coleoptera,
Diptera,
And even aptera
Decline to give any support
To the notion that this is a holiday resort.
The authorities are aware of this
And so, to make amends for what we miss—
And partly for fear that our morale may crack
Our fares are paid for us not only going out
but also, **WE HOPE**, coming back.

Borrowing

BEFORE I get under way with this article I want my readers to go back and have another look at the title. They will notice that it gives them a sharp reaction of either guilt or righteousness, or possibly both. Which it is does not matter. I only wanted to prove that we have all of us, in our time, borrowed something we are still meaning to give back or had borrowed from us something we are still meaning to get back. Borrowing may thus be concluded to be as universal a habit among mankind as any other universal habit.

In order to get a clear idea of the scope and nature of borrowing let us first consider it in the abstract; that is, not as borrowing anything specific, but just borrowing. What picture forms in our minds? A curious one—someone walking backwards down someone else's garden path, wheeling a lawn-mower with unnatural care until out of hearing, that is to say out of sight round the garden gate. Now this, psychologists think, is very interesting. They do not think it interesting about the unnatural care, but they do like to know that mankind uses the lawn-mower as its symbolization of borrowing because this proves conclusively to psychologists that mankind is perfectly capable of looking after itself. The lawn-mower, psychologists say, is about the most potentially unborrowable object, by reason of its shape and the way the blades catch on things, in the borrowing world; but mankind, in fixing it as the norm, has made the lending or borrowing of it seem a part of normal life compared with which the loan of even a bicycle is easy.

I don't think I need say much about how to borrow a lawn-mower. The point to remember is to up-end the works so that the blades do not mow the gravel of the lender's garden-path. The borrower walks backwards so as to face the right way for apologizing, promising immediate return of the lawn-mower and admiring it, all of which, taken in rotation, should last until the garden gate, unless, of course, the lender follows the borrower right down the path and leans over the gate, when my readers must use their common sense. As for giving a lawn-mower back, there is a rule that the borrower may keep it a day or two longer, but only because there is a rule that any borrower may keep anything a day or two longer, and this is only because people are, after all, human beings. I mean borrowers are human beings. Lenders are not; they are the object lent to the borrower. Thus the lender of a lawn-mower becomes associated with the lawn-mower in the borrower's mind until the lawn-mower is safely inside the borrower's garden, when lender and lawn-mower fuse in the borrower's mind into just the lawn-mower. When the lawn-mower is due to be returned a subtle change takes place, the *lawn-mower* becoming the *lender*, so that the borrower cannot open the shed door without getting anything from a reproachful look to a torrent of abuse, according to the borrower's assessment of the lender's character. After the return of the lawn-mower the lender becomes the lawn-mower again for a day or two, the association gradually fading until the borrower wants the lawn-mower again.

Roughly, this process happens when anything is borrowed from anyone, but there are variations. It is rather strange, for instance, that one person can borrow up to half a

The fact that goods made of raw materials in short supply owing to war conditions are advertised in this paper should not be taken as an indication that they are necessarily available for export.



MAURICE McLAUGHLIN

dozen knives, forks and spoons from another without either side feeling the slightest obligation. Psychologists tell us that this is because what they call cutlery is only borrowed for a large-scale meal, and only borrowed from someone who has been invited. Thus the lender can keep an eye on the cutlery throughout the meal, wash it up after and take it home. It is also rather strange that any important carpentering tool like a saw can be borrowed without, at the time, any guilt attached. This is because the borrower is feeling good on account of being about to do something as tough as carpentry, while the lender feels good also at the time, naturally. Also both sides know the lender is not going to want it back for ages, and this, in the borrower's mind, means anything up to a month after first being asked for it. There is a definite set of rules about asking for the return of a saw, by the way, the first time counting as a playful reminder, the second as a routine follow-up, the third as serious and the fourth, if a fourth is necessary, as definitely unfriendly.

Now I come to a very interesting variation of borrowing, known technically as *giving*. It counts among psychologists as borrowing because the taker is under an obligation to give the giver something else, and the process goes like this. Human nature, carried away by a temporary burst of over-friendship, promises someone, say, half a tin of pre-war distemper. The offer is refused, but only mechanically, because the potential recipient of the distemper knows that the potential giver is dead keen on giving it. Nothing else will happen until the offerer is reminded of the offer by seeing whatever it is that needs distemping. The offerer is now all set, owing to a kind of subconscious yeasting which even the offerer did not realize was going on in the offerer's mind, to go home, look out the tin and find that the lid is not quite on and the distemper has all dried up. It now only remains for the

offerer to notice a tin of whitewash in a shop, mention the fact and, so to speak, sign off, feeling a positive benefactor. Meanwhile the other person will have promised the offerer a strip of underfelt to stop the draughts under the doors last winter, so everything will have cancelled out. (Psychologists also relate this process to borrowing because at a certain stage one of the people concerned will have turned into half a tin of pre-war distemper and the other into a strip of underfelt.)

Conversely, there is a process of giving which is closely allied to borrowing. This consists of taking a cigarette off someone. Only the hardened, psychologists say, will ask anyone to *give* them a cigarette; normal people will mutter something inaudible about giving it back later, as an insurance for next time. Stamp-borrowing is subtly different. In theory people do not borrow stamps at all, only lend them. The person taking the stamp goes through the motions of hunting for twopence-halfpenny, holds out a shilling, and is told not to bother but to give the lender a stamp some other time. This means that the borrower will give someone else a stamp some other time, and feel all square with the world; but it works out better than it sounds, because the person who has lent the stamp will be thereby entitled to take a stamp off someone else. Finally I come to the simplest form of borrowing known to mankind. This is known as borrowing half a crown. It consists of someone who owes someone else sevenpence borrowing one-and-eleven more to make it half a crown, and paying back three-and-six to make it a shilling. It either comes right in the end or not. Psychologists say probably not; adding that they base their well-known theory on human nature forgetting only what it wants to forget on the well-known fact that there are more people in the world who can remember lending half a crown than there are people who can remember borrowing one.



Horrocks

"'Bring it back in about twenty years' time'—I LIKE that!"

At the Pictures

OLD STUFF

NOT having read the novel, I don't know whether it was as full of clichés of plot, situation and dialogue as the film *Fanny By Gaslight* (Director: ANTHONY ASQUITH) suggests. Of plot and situation, perhaps. A strange thing is that Mr. ASQUITH does not seem to have made much effort to freshen it by interesting treatment, so that the rare unusual device—for instance, the little sequence letting us know by an entirely cinematic combination of sight and sound that a man has killed himself—comes as a shock and seems quite out of key among so much that is simple, obvious and hackneyed (in a word, if you allow the word, corny). Essentially and unmistakably the film of a novel, *Fanny By Gaslight* takes its leisurely chronological course, the well-known, instantly-recognizable characters making their easy and immediate impression. All around in the audience one hears the comments of ladies happily "losing themselves" in the story ("Oh, what a beast!" . . . "Now she's all right—the old dear" and so on—such things as might be said by someone actually among the people in the fable). For such fans as these, who I suppose are numerous enough, the film will no doubt be almost wholly enjoyable. More detached and critical minds can approve visually of a good deal of it and appreciate the playing of JAMES MASON as an old-fashioned nobleman-villain, of PHYLLIS CALVERT as *Fanny*, and others; but from time to time they will feel inclined to yawn.

The word "corny" may as well be used again about certain things in *A Canterbury Tale* (Directors:—MICHAEL POWELL and EMERIC PRESSBURGER). I am thinking particularly of the kid stuff, the sequences involving the small boys playing soldiers: the noisy delight with which comfortable middle-age in the audience greets the old, old routine of the saluting infant in the oversize cap, and the other easy laughs, does not alter the fact that they are easy laughs—that even an incompetent and stupid director,

given a few small boys, could rouse that sort of audience to that sort of laughter with hardly an effort.

However, what I have called the kid stuff is only a scrap among all the other scraps that make up *A Canterbury Tale*. The excuse for the film is



[Fanny by Gaslight]

HE LIVED TO HEAR HER CALL HIM
"FATHER."

Fanny PHYLLIS CALVERT
Oliver Seymour STUART LINSELL



[A Canterbury Tale]

A PILGRIM

Sergt. Bob Johnson SERGT. JOHN SWEET

Canterbury, and the countryside round it, photographed throughout in summer sunshine and very well indeed worth looking at. The only well-known player is ERIC PORTMAN, in the peculiar over-manufactured part of a mystical local J.P. who will go to any length to make soldiers come to his lectures; the most interesting player is Sergeant JOHN SWEET of the U.S. Army, who portrays a U.S. Army sergeant with very great natural ability and ease of manner. Beside these two, the other principals are apt sometimes to have a rather self-conscious and stilted air. The spring or basis of the plot, such as it is, seems pretty arbitrary and improbable; like another critic, "I could not swallow the glue"—not from those hands, anyway. (The point is that a mysterious character pours glue over the heads of girls out at night with soldiers.) But from the miscellaneous heap of this film most people will be able to pick out much that is pleasant and entertaining, and the effect of its pictorially beautiful scenes is only occasionally weakened by the sight of one of the characters being raptly impressed by them.

A fine documentary is JOHN STEINBECK's *The Forgotten Village* (Director: HERBERT KLINE)—it is called "John Steinbeck's" because he wrote the commentary and the narrative foundation. It is about the Mexican village of Santiago and teems with the magnificent pictures that a skilful director and photographer (Camera: ALEXANDER HACKENSMID) can make in the harsh Mexican sun. The commentary of such films as this is always a point of argument: either you like the gentle voice as it intones, consciously simple in phrase and attempting to heighten the emotional atmosphere by insistent rhythmic repetition, or you faintly regret it. Personally I rather regret it: this style of narrative, so close to the edge of sentimentality, so near to implying condescension towards the simplicity it describes, is alien to my taste. But this film, the story of the village boy who came to realize that the local "wise woman" could not cure the sickness that was killing the children, and that the doctors from the city could, is otherwise admirable. R. M.

Our Correspondence

BOROUGH POLICE STATION,
MAYFIELD GARDENS,
SMITHTOWN 9

May 22nd 1944

DEAR SIR,—Thank you for your letter of May 18. We beg to inform you re Renewal of Identity Card that said card has been invalid as from September 19 1941 (No. 224 Section 4 PLmo 2419).

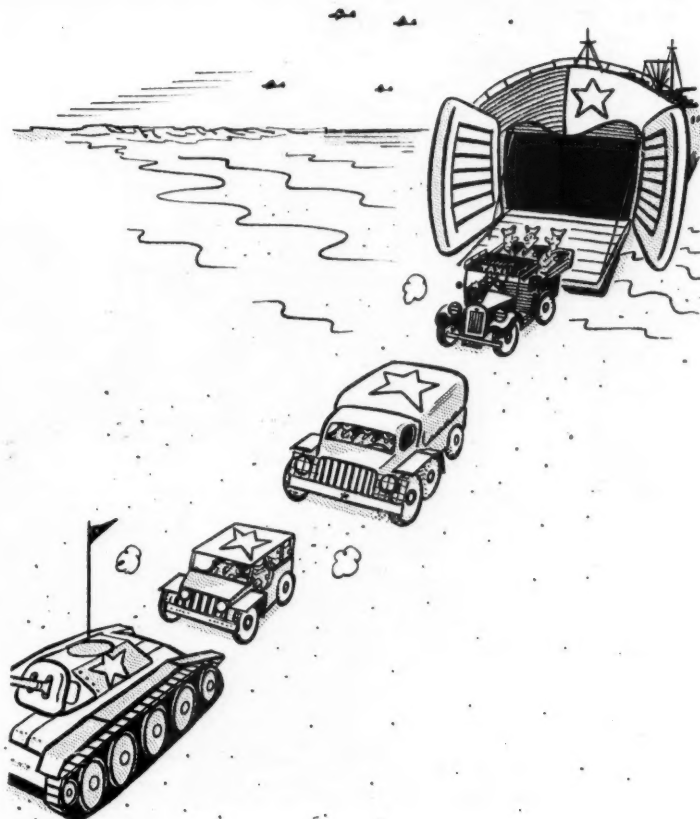
Since Identity Cards rendered invalid during latter half of 1942 (see Art 3 PLmp6) were confiscated by Borough Police Constabulary (Policy 34, August 23rd 1941-42) we regret it is impossible to renew your Identity Card (No. 224 Section 4 PLmo 2419).

Your case has been put at once before the Temporary Acting Sub-Representative for the Chief of Police pending reorganization of this particular Investigation of Civic Rights in War-Time Branch of Scotland Yard, at present resident at above War-time address. Your case will thus be considered at the first session meeting for this month of Borough Council in conjunction with other court cases as they arise. This meeting will, it is expected, take place some time at the end of the current month.

Up to this time you, being resident upon Borough land and thus subject and liable to Borough Constabulary Laws, having no Identity Card (renewal of same being neglected) automatically fall under Resident Alien Laws as described in Article 42 Civic Jurisdiction. You are then liable for imprisonment for attempt to evade the law, and will duly be fined according to the length of time such evasion has been continued over and above the extra week allowed for illness, mental disease or death on the part of person neglecting to renew Identity Card.

Such a peculiar case has not previously come within the range of our jurisdiction, and therefore we must, regretfully, pass your papers on to our Civic Law representative to be dealt with as under Article 47 of that department.

The civic cases at present being handled by the above-mentioned department do not, however (according to our knowledge of such cases we have seen), include any such as yours. Therefore we fear there will be probably a lapse of perhaps three to four months, during which time the case will pass through various channels, to be discussed and handled in due course by the House of Commons.



David Thompson

For those three to four months you will be, according to our knowledge of such a position, considered non-existent (article 73 Registrar of Deaths during War-time, Civic Laws dept 9). Your food, clothing and personal points ration books (including petrol and any additional coupons) will be duly confiscated. (Borough Police Home Policy PLmp195 subsection 3.)

In such a situation—assuming your reluctance to becoming non-existent, we would advise you (though the decision of course entirely rests with you) that you register under Births and proceed accordingly. This will entitle you to cod-liver oil, extra milk and orange juice and baby respirator, for a period of four years. Also free meals at school up to eleven years, extra ration books being obtainable upon presentation of your birth-certificate to local Food Office by your mother.

We trust this is all quite clear and wish you success,

Yours faithfully,
(indecipherable signature)

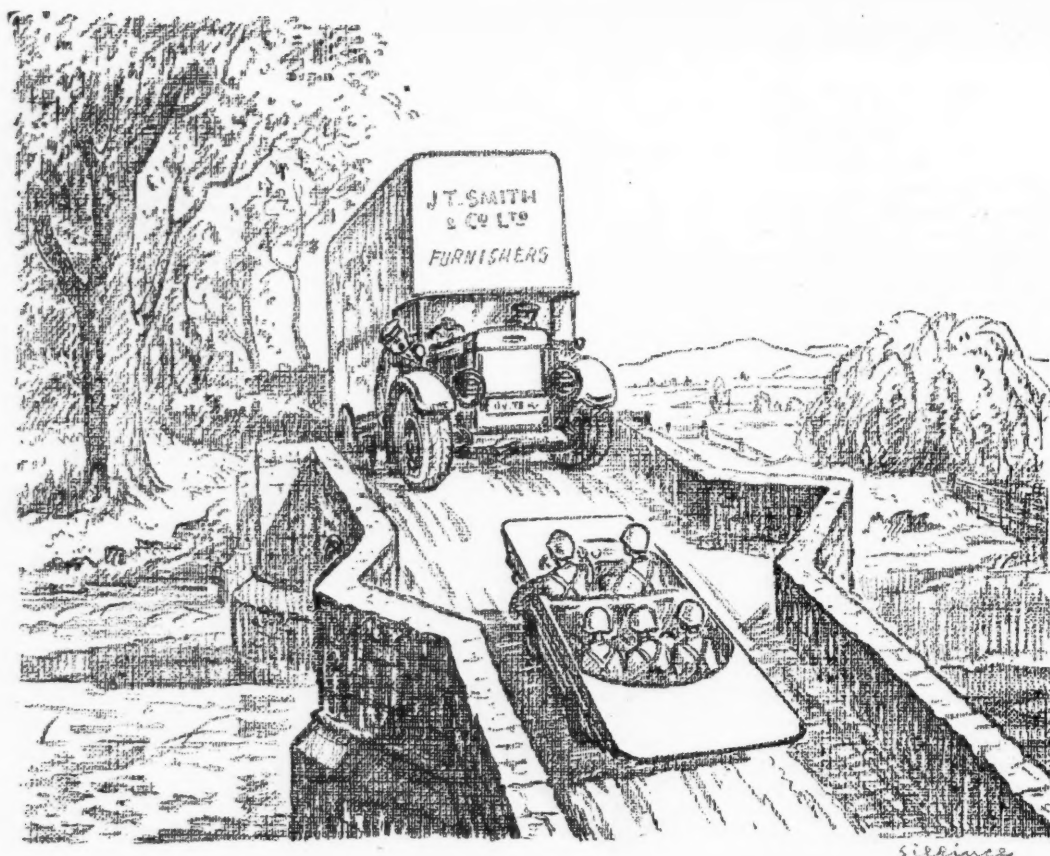
for Chief of Borough Police by Tempy
Resident representative of Civic Law,
now Assistant Adviser to Borough
Constabulary in absence of Chief Insp
Umblebot of the C.I.D., at present
engaged in Home Guard duties.

John Brown, Esq.,
c/o Cudleigh,
Deadend Rd., City.

“Sir,—Sheath knives, pea-rifles, catapults, slings, and cigarettes in the mouths of children are quite a common sight any time, any day, Sundays included. I have never known an adult to check any of these children, and the majority are not deprived of their parents. There are other things to be seen which I do not care to write about.
SERIOUS OBSERVER.”

Letter in N.Z. paper.

Well, that'll do to go on with.



"Wotcher doin' on a ruddy bridge, anyway?"

Belinda, Journeying Homeward, Buys her Sweet Ration.

(From "The Rape of the Coupon")

THE hour once struck, Belinda took her ease,
And drap'd with umber shroud the nimble keys;
In trembling haste her inky fingers lav'd,
And deftly smooth'd what cunning *Marcel* wav'd;
With silken fold entwin'd the graceful throat,
And cloth'd brief beauty in a briefer coat;
Nor e'en forgot th' ingenious awning, made
For rain a shelter and from sun a shade.
From toil unloos'd, her devious way she plann'd
Through quiet *Temple* to the busy *Strand*;
Beneath the circle's sign, the crimson square,
She saw'd with frantick hand the ambient air;
At last, submissive to her mute appeal,
The skilful *Jehu* stay'd the flying wheel;
And warn'd by trouser'd nymph, without delay
Th' explosive engine cours'd its destin'd way.
By silver *Thames*, Belinda mark'd the hour
That toll'd from *Freedom's* democrattick tower,
Where thou, of *Marlborough's* mighty line begot,
Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes not.
Soon to the smoky edifice she came
That bore aloft august *Victoria's* name;

Gleams with untold delays the *Southern* line,
And travellers famish while directors dine.*
At length she reach'd dull *Streatham's* brickly vale,
The haunt of *Johnson* and the home of *Thrale*.
On hurrying feet she pass'd the open door
Where sugar'd sweets display'd their meagre store,
And straight from dainty reticule she took
With eager hands the many-coupon'd book.
The balanc'd needle swung its circle round,
And halted constant at the quarter pound.
With stern resolve uprose th' attendant swain,
And fair Belinda shriek'd, but shriek'd in vain.
No tender sylph, responsive to her cry,
On gauzy pinion wing'd the azure sky,
Or soft her airy substance interpos'd
When ruthless hand the steely forfex clos'd.
The sever'd billet 'neath the awful shears
Fell fluttering downward with Belinda's tears;
Her wild lamenting through the twilight rose,
Awak'd the sky, and stir'd *Acacia Close*;
Nor ceas'd till *Morpheus* through the starry deep
Pursu'd his flight, and lull'd her woe to sleep. . . .

* Pope afterwards confessed to the injustice of this couplet, but with characteristic obstinacy declined to omit it from the poem.



"... AND SOME OF HERCULES"

General Alexander. "Just another of my labours."

Impressions of Parliament

Business Done

Tuesday, May 16th.—House of Commons: Psycho-Analysis.

Wednesday, May 17th.—House of Commons: Second-hand Laws.

Thursday, May 18th.—House of Commons: Secrets.

Tuesday, May 16th.—Analytical. That was the mood of the House of Commons to-day. Or perhaps almost psycho-analytical. As your scribe has recorded before, the House likes to run through the emotions and experiment a bit with new-fangled ideas, but never before has it been in so self-examining a mood—or *quite* so eager to examine the actions and motives of others.

Nearly always there is an expert or two (self-appointed or otherwise) to find hidden snags and sinister plots in most Government proposals. That is how the Parliamentary system works. But to-day every blessed thing came under the dissecting knife—if that is not mixing the treatment.

Even the minor (or is it major?) joys of life, like smoking and drinking, fell beneath the merciless process. Mr. GEORGE STRAUSS, fixing Sir JOHN ANDERSON, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with the hypnotic gaze of the successful psycho-analyst, thus addressed him: "How much of the cost of 2s. 4d. for twenty cigarettes, 1s. for a pint of beer, and £1 5s. 9d. for a bottle of whisky goes in taxation?"

With a "Father-I-cannot-tell-alie" expression (and no Minister wears it more becomingly) Sir JOHN glanced at the eagerly-listening Members, and replied: "One-and-nin-pence, sevenpence-halfpenny, eighteen and fourpence-halfpenny."

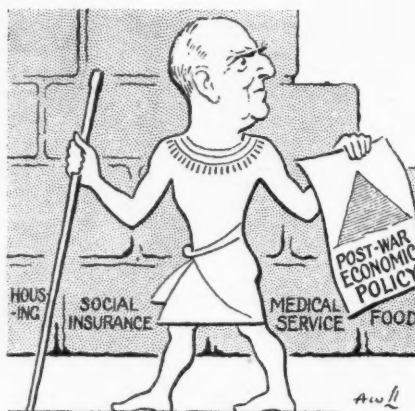
Realizing for the first time to the full their patriotic contribution to the cost of the war, several Members hurried out to have a cigarette, or something. The others made the resolution we and they have made every successive Budget Day from time immemorial and decided to give up smoking and drinking.

But, as one Member remarked philosophically, *someone* has to pay for the war. How true that remark was Sir JOHN brought home when he asked—in a speech lasting precisely one hundred and eighty seconds—for another £1,000,000,000 towards the cost of the war. He was careful to explain that that sum would just about tide him over to "a date in August."

Mr. PETHICK LAWRENCE commented

obscurely that "he that wills the end wills the means," and let it go at that. But Mr. DICK STOKES, who is always somewhat more given to analysis than most, complained that we were spending too much on (of all things in the wide world!) the organization of National Savings Weeks. They were a sham, anyway, quoth he. He knew a case where the local mayor and Corporation were mustered, and processed through the heavily-beflagged town, preceded by a band and trumpeters. And, bringing up the rear, was a little man in a top-hat and bearing a velvet cushion. And what was on the cushion?

Members leaned forward eagerly, anxious for the "sensational revelations" beloved of the Sunday Press



THE BEGINNING OF A PYRAMID

"Our economic policy must be based on realities."
Lord Woolton, Minister of Reconstruction.

and Mr. DICK STOKES. Lowering his voice to a suitable pitch, Mr. STOKES "was able to reveal" that the little man was, in fact, The Man From The Prudential, in person, and that on the cushion he bore, not a strange device, but a cheque for £2,000,000. Mr. STOKES considered this in itself a strange device to get money for the war, and he was not in favour of it. But the House was not sufficiently moved to refuse Sir JOHN his thousand millions. Mr. STOKES registered no surprise.

Mr. ROBERT HUDSON, the Minister of Agriculture, was also on a winner when he brought forward his Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, which speedily got its Second Reading. Like Sir JOHN, Mr. HUDSON said quite frankly that he was going to ask for more—and more—and that the farmers would, he knew, not fail him. And

when Mr. HUDSON turns on his charm he usually gets what he wants.

Mr. FRANK BOWLES (who, having just resigned from the Home Guard, seems to need some new outlet for his natural bellicosity) sought to analyse the recent speech of that singularly un-analysable person, Lord BEAVERBROOK, our Lord Privy Seal. Why, asked Mr. BOWLES fiercely, did the noble and tough Lord dismiss in two words the Labour Party's pamphlet on civil flying?

"It shows he must have considered it," answered Mr. CHURCHILL subtly, to the amusement of the Conservatives and corresponding discomfiture of ex-Private BOWLES, who forgot all his battle drill and retired in bad order when Colonel ARTHUR EVANS, carrying out a neat right-flanking movement, blandly inquired: "Why did Lord BEAVERBROOK use *two* words to deal with the pamphlet, instead of *one*?"

As the old Parliamentary reports used to say: "No answer was returned." But there was (*Laughter*)—quite a lot.

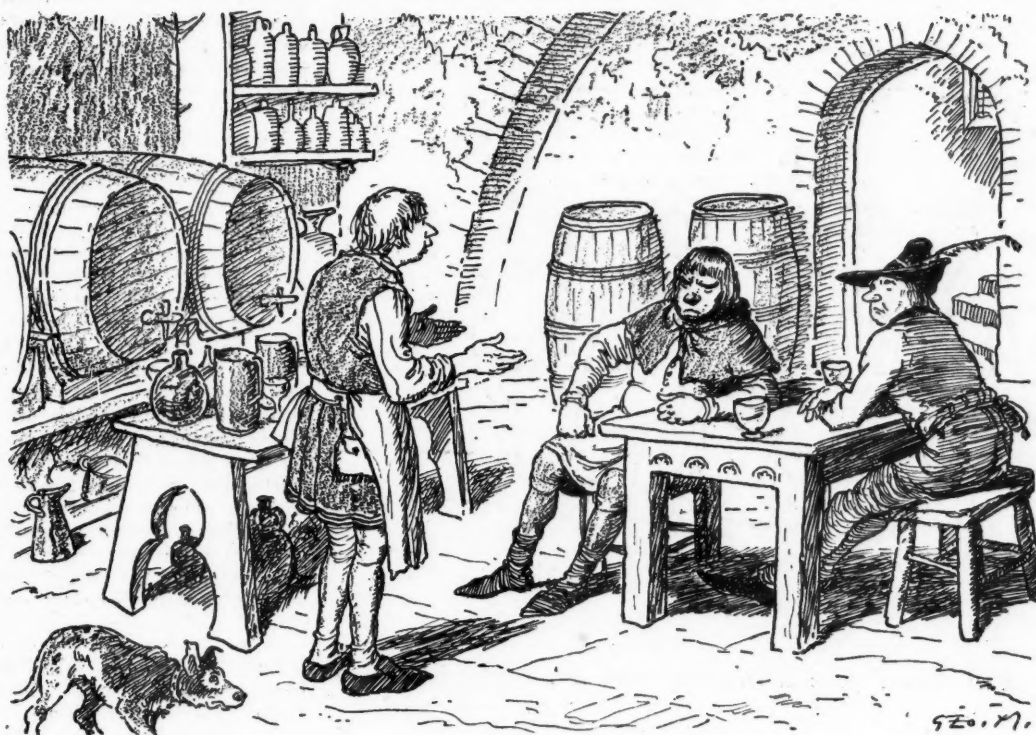
Mr. TINKER, of all people, then tried a bit of "psycho." He expressed the view that "all ranks are of the opinion" that saluting in the streets is more honoured in the breach than in the observance and asked Mr. CHURCHILL to order that failure to salute when off duty should no longer be an offence.

"No, sir!" said Mr. CHURCHILL.

What a Home Guard the Prime Minister would have made! He had the battle-drill book all off pat, especially that bit about going in quick, as soon as the grenade has gone off. Scarcely had his blunt refusal stunned Mr. TINKER than he rapped out: "If you go to Moscow you will see the smartest saluting in the world, and the greatest importance is attached to these minor acts of ceremony in the building up of armies capable of facing the worst rigours of war."

While Mr. TINKER was still dizzy Mr. CHURCHILL added that saluting showed respect for the King's Commission, and was an act of courtesy to our Allies. So saluting is to stay—if and when.

The Home Guard (possibly as a sort of birthday present, since it celebrated, with Royal congratulations, its fourth anniversary two days ago) came in for a lot of attention to-day. Mr. DRIBERG wanted to know why his stout lads in Essex should be given "infinitesimal pieces of cheese," and Sir JAMES GRIGG, the War Minister, said he was sorry he had been trrroubled, and agreed it



"My very last butt of Malmsey, and there was a duke in it!"

was "hard cheese" for Essex. "If I send you one of these bits of cheese, will you nibble it?" demanded Mr. DRIBERG. "Metaphorically, yes," said Sir JAMES, ever the cautious one.

Mr. DRIBERG clearly thought that the only way such a small portion could be nibbled.

Wednesday, May 17th.—Nobody can tell just how the House of Commons will ever react to any given set of circumstances. For that matter it is next door to impossible to forecast how "given" a set of circumstances will be. Nobody was surprised, therefore, when to-day the decidedly grim atmosphere of yesterday gave place to as gay and irresponsible an air as might have marked a pre-war carnival.

Members laughed at anything—or nothing. If there was the slightest excuse for a titter they rolled off their seats, roaring unrestrainedly. Which was a nice change, anyway.

When Mr. GEOFFREY MANDER first appeared on the Liberal benches to ask critical questions of Ministers, then bobbed up on the Government side as Parliamentary Private Secretary to a Minister, then whirled back to the Opposition seats again, there were deafening cheers. Mr. MCGOVERN kindly

suggested that Mr. EDEN, as Leader of the House, might facilitate such quick changes by providing an escalator.

But it was Mr. ROBERT BOOTHBY, from Aberdeen, who is not normally given to uproarious humour, who stole the show. The fact that it was all unintentional detracted not at all from an effective piece of entertainment.

Mr. BOOTHBY had complained that things were not as they ought to be in the Aberdeen fish market. "Oh, I don't know," was the reply of the Food Minister, "it's not too bad."

"But," rasped Mr. BOOTHBY, "I was there on Monday, the First of May, —(Cheers)—and the stench was so appalling—(tumultuous cheers)—that nobody would go near—(screams of unrestrained joy). And I—"

Just what the Hon. Member did we shall never know, for the House dissolved into noisy and hopeless mirth, which was in no way modified by the fact that Mr. BOOTHBY had not meant to be funny, and preserved a solemn demeanour. It was merely a misplaced entry in Mr. Punch's Anthology of Things That Might Have Been Better Expressed.

After that it was not surprising to find Flt.-Lieut. TELLING announcing

that "in view of the unsatisfactory nature of the question (his own) he would raise it on the adjournment"—a pleasant variant of the more usual criticism of the answer. Apparently this was a sort of self-psycho-analysis. Perhaps it will catch on; perhaps not.

The House talked all day about delegated legislation. Like the preacher on sin, they were against it, and Mr. HERBERT MORRISON, the Home Secretary, promised that there would be less of it in future, and that what there was would be more under the control of Parliament than it had been, through a Select Committee.

Which seemed fair enough.

Thursday, May 18th.—Quite a lot of to-day was spent, behind locked doors, in a discussion of future hours of meeting. Although most Members thought the secrecy slightly ridiculous (Sir HERBERT WILLIAMS expressed the view that the Germans would know the result of the debate within half an hour), Mr. EDEN "spied strangers" and the impenetrable doors swung to.

Your scribe regrets, therefore, that he is in no position to confirm or deny any statements made by Herr Doktor Goebbels on the subject. Which is a pity.



"Well, can't I stand in the wrong queue if I want to?"

The Cosmic Mess

By Albert Haddock ("Garrulicus" and "Sternutator")

A TEASING mystery gets much attention among the higher age-groups of political personnel. Who are the people who answer the questions put in Gallup Polls, Institutes of Public Opinion, and so forth? Who, and where, are the "pollees"? And—most important—how many of them are there? We get about a good bit ourselves, and we meet all kinds and classes of people: but we have never met one of the honoured and sagacious people who are asked to say if Mr. Churchill is a good man or the Gold Standard a good thing. We should like to meet them. And, above all, we want to meet the glorious ten per cent. who curtly reply "Don't know".

We are always told that these inquiries are deliciously "scientific", and that the persons pestered "represent a cross-section of the people." But how do we know? And how big is the piece of people of which they are a cross-section? You may have a cross-section of a small piece of cheese or a large piece of cheese: and the two may lead you to opposite conclusions about the condition of the cheese.

Why all the secrecy, anyway, in an institution which is all for making

public the secret, unknown opinions of the nation? Why don't they tell us frankly that the question "Do you approve of the Gold Standard?" was put to one peer, one poet, one plumber, one policeman, one publican and one paper-hanger? Then we should know what to think about what they think about the Gold Standard. Personally, in the absence of evidence, we are unconvinced that the business is even as scientific as that; and until the poll-promoters tell us a little more we shall hold to our naughty belief that the editor strolls into the passage and asks the first five members of the staff he meets.

The questions for the Haddock Poll this week are:

- (1) Do you think that Double, Single and all Summer Time should be abandoned after the war?
- (2) Do you see the smallest reason why there should not be one time (Greenwich) the world over?

People keep writing us earnest letters to ask if we approve of Equal Pay for

Women. Of course. We want to see *Double Pay for Women*. Then perhaps we may get somebody to help our poor wives with the housework.

We are asked by many brave sailors to implore the dailies to go slow with the expression "little ships"—indeed, to lay off it altogether unless they can use it with judgment. We do not know who started this expression. There is a "Little Ships" Club, we know, because we belong to it; but the point of the title, we gather, is that it refers to small craft which are not "ships" at all, and nothing like ships. The crews of the gallant vessels which charge about the Channel—gun-boats, motor-launches, etc.—go raving mad, we hear, when they are described as "little ships". It puts them on a par with the oldest cabin-cruiser at Benfleet. The right name is "small ships" or minor war-vessels. And to describe a destroyer, not far short of 2,000 tons, as a "little ship" is merely crazy.

And, for heaven's sake, can't we have less about "Soviet" tanks and "Nazi" bombers? Look at the headlines of any daily and you will see this lunacy everywhere. We must confess that the papers are set a poor example by the politicians. Mr. Eden, after one of the big conferences, spoke several times of "Anglo-American-Soviet relations." Why not "Russian"? And he crowned all by referring to "the Soviet people". I have just been invited to a British-Soviet Women's Exhibition. I shan't go till they change the name. For, surely, Soviet means no more than council, committee or something of that sort? If the Russians are to be "the Soviet people" the British had better be "the Parliament people" and the Americans "the Congress people". "Nazi submarines" is dangerous as well as silly, because it encourages the view that we are fighting the Nazi Party only, and that the ordinary nice Germans would never think of torpedoing our ships. However, if it is all right, then our battleships ought to be "National Government battleships," or perhaps "Party-Truce battleships". And the American fleet, surely, should consist of "Democrat ships". Lor! what a world of nonsense!

To celebrate the spring, and to stress the need for a betting-tax, we had our first bet of the war the other day. We used our old and tried technique. We looked down the list of horses, chose

a name that pleased us, and asked a friend to put ten bob each way on it for us. Not till then did we study the form, the betting and all the stuff. We were not surprised to find that our horse was a hot favourite. Our instinct is infallible. Sure enough, the good horse came in first. Unfortunately another horse did the same thing. We mean, it was a dead-heat. And the betting was "odds on". So we lost money.

We now hear that our friend did not make the bet for us after all. So the whole narrative is cancelled. . . . No. We will now do it in Basic English.

With a view to noting the part of the year which comes before summer, and to making clear the need for a tax upon those who put money on horses, we made our first attempt since the great man-fight to make money by chance the other day. We did it in our old and well-tested way. We took a look down the list of horses, made a selection of a horse with a pleasing name, and made a request to a friend to put ten silver pieces of money on it for us. Not till then did we give our mind to the way the horses had been running before, the amount of money put down and offered, and all that sort of thing. We were not surprised on learning that in the opinion of nearly everyone our horse would come in first. Our feeling is always right. Certainly enough, the good horse came in first. Unhappily another horse did the same thing. Our desire is to say that they came in level. And in order to make money one had to put down more money than it was desired to get. So we had a loss of money.

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There! But if you knew how exhausted we are!

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"TORIES FAIL TO SPLIT LABOUR."

This was the heading of the first article in *Tumbril*. We read on with some excitement to see what the "Stupid Party" had been up to now. It was worse than we thought. It was a "Tory plot, carefully worked up, to split the Labour Party." The story took us back to the dear old days of General Elections. Do you remember? All through the campaign the poor old Tories would be described as a lot of brainless clods who knew nothing of anything but fox-hunting and port wine, and could hardly put two sentences, or thoughts, together. Yet always, at the last moment, the brainless Tories came out with some diabolical plot, some Machiavellian stratagem, which was much too much

for the forces of enlightenment, intelligence and culture.

Well, see what the Stupid Party have done now, in the Bevin-Bevan affair. First of all, they persuaded the War Cabinet to approve a strike regulation which they knew would "split Labour". The Labour Ministers in the War Cabinet, of course, were much too innocent to foresee this or to spot the plot. Then they persuaded the shy Mr. Bevan to make one of his rare and reluctant speeches against the Government. Not content with that, they induced Mr. Arthur Greenwood to come down heavily on his junior colleague (you may not know it, but the leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party always takes his orders from the Tories). Then they ran round the country telling the rank and file of Labour that Bevan was right and

Greenwood wrong. And so on. This picture of the steps in the "plot" is ours, not *Tumbril's*. *Tumbril* gives no details at all. Headlines are easier.

* * * * *

Disturbing accounts of "racial persecution" in the Royal Navy have come to hand. It appears that the authorities have carelessly embarked men from Yorkshire and Lancashire in the same ship: and disrespectful and wounding words have passed between the two sides. The Wars of the Roses are constantly mentioned on the mess-decks, and all the old animosities are raging anew. Several Lancashire seamen, unaccustomed to rude words, have requested a transfer to a Lancashire ship, and one Yorkshire stoker has written home to his mother. Questions are to be asked in the House. A. P. H.



At the Play

"CRISIS IN HEAVEN" (LYRIC)

MAJOR ERIC LINKLATER'S neo-classical comedy is an Elysian shadow-show, a parable of war and peace among the immortals. All is not serene in the fields of asphodel: the arrogant shade of *Frederick the Great* leads one faction and the Roman matron *Volumnia*, now an Amazonian menace, the other. These war-mongers and the trivial causes of strife matter little.

LINKLATER has concentrated upon Elysium's peacemakers whose plan, fathered by *Aristophanes*, is for Beauty, the ageless Helen of Troy, to wed Reason—in the person of *Voltaire*—and so give birth to the true Spirit of Peace.

"Such a mad marriage never was before." Bride and surly groom are pardonably doubtful at first; but the planners have their way, and in due time the entire Elysian Press—or so we may suppose—announces a joyful event: "To Helen (of Troy), wife of François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire, at the Florence Nightingale Nursing Home, Elysium, a daughter (Irene)." The girl, appearing like Minerva, fully-armed, proves to be a precocious and extremely decorative policewoman. She settles the war within a week, and—for things move swiftly in Elysium when they get going at all—is presently preparing for her own union with the English soldier *Courage* (one of LINKLATER'S most sympathetic creations) who fell at the Pass of Thermopylæ.

The cast of the satirically-treated assemblage of blithe and gloomy spirits, directed by Mr. JOHN GIELGUD, contains the curious team of *Aristophanes* and *Abraham Lincoln*, both active committee-men in the peace party; the Russian poet, *Alexander Sergeyevitch Pushkin*; *Doctor Galen*, whose Elysian practice flourishes; and, for a single fleeting visit, that bland weathercock the *Vicar of Bray*. Whatever else is wrong, none can accuse the author of hashing up an old plot or of merely body-snatching in the now fashionable mode.

By ill-fortune, some of the virtue seems to have evaporated in the

transition from manuscript to theatre. The Elysian Fields—on this showing at least—are hardly playing-fields. In spite of its intelligence and wit the comedy disappoints, partly one would say because of an uneven and occasionally self-conscious performance, and partly because dialogue which must read well on the page is often as undramatic as the Imaginary Conversations of Landor.

An important character is surprisingly savourless. Where is the Attic salt in this *Aristophanes*? He is a tedious fellow, and Mr. LLOYD PEARSON,

purple patchwork, observe the richest romantic code. (Mr. MORSE has a lively sense of comedy). Mr. ESMOND KNIGHT, welcomed home to the stage, is rightly cast as *Courage*, LINKLATER'S salute to the British man-at-arms; Miss ADELE DIXON is the glowing incarnation of Peace Triumphant; and we have a professional call from the *Galen* of Mr. DEERING WELLS, whose telegraphic address must be Bedside Manor, Elysium. Among the other shades Miss DOROTHY GREEN loyally transforms Shakespeare's majestic *Volumnia* into LINKLATER'S militant virago of the Elysian battlefields, and Miss JOSEPHINE MIDDLETON'S *Florence Nightingale* guards health and hygiene with determined propriety. Mr. FELIX IRWIN looks in as the horticultural *Vicar of Bray* who changed his politics but preserved his pear-trees. There is also a scrubbily cantankerous poet, one *Froust* (Mr. NICHOLAS PHIPPS), formerly leader of the New English Nominalists, whose behaviour is as uncouth as his poetry is perverse. The author might find another exit for him: by now, surely, the Hollywood joke should be consigned to Limbo rather than Elysium?

The piece has only one major creation. That is the shrewd, splintery, malicious *Voltaire* of Mr. ERNEST THESIGER, who looks like a figure fashioned from time-yellowed ivory. Actor and dramatist are in perfect agreement. *Crisis in Heaven* should be seen if only for *Voltaire*'s agitation before his shot-gun

wedding to *Helen*, and his twittering nervousness at *Miss Nightingale*'s nursing-home as, in the improbable society of *Lincoln* and *Aristophanes*, he awaits news of the accouchement.

In short, an odd newcomer to Shaftesbury Avenue. The performance is tantalisingly incomplete; but those who are lapped in Elysium with this company of poets, wits and sages will find their experience amusing as well as exasperating. They will certainly remember Mr. CECIL BEATON'S sets and that last back-drop of the green-swelling Elysian Fields where the newborn child of Beauty and Reason now proclaims her "olives of endless age."

J. C. T.



ANXIOUS WAITING—WILL IT BE PEACE?

<i>Abraham Lincoln</i>	MR. HERBERT LOMAS
<i>Voltaire</i>	MR. ERNEST THESIGER
<i>Aristophanes</i>	MR. LLOYD PEARSON

who can be an alert and fluent comedian, is baffled by him. We are uneasy too about heaven-born *Helen*, Sparta's queen, though here the fault is not LINKLATER'S. Miss DOROTHY DICKSON looks lovely enough to have fired the train of the Trojan War, but her speaking voice is out of tune and the part, cunningly-designed and phrased, inevitably suffers.

The author is better served by his *Abraham Lincoln*—Mr. HERBERT LOMAS, long drilled in Drinkwater's chronicle, knows all about the hickory-tough President—and by Mr. BARRY MORSE as the flaming *Pushkin*, who helps unwittingly to set the Elysian War alight and whose speeches, a



"No, we HAVEN'T found it yet, but I'm sure I put it in the 'Urgent' basket only about three weeks ago."

Notice to Helpers

FOR this year's Whit demonstration Mr. Slagg whose coal business has gone to the dogs of war has offered to loan his flat-topped conveyances to get the scholars to the field fit for the fray. Some of you older hands will be wanted to go with them as you know what they are when they get together. Of course they will not want it and try to push you off the carts but a firm hand on every dray will save you getting black marks. It is up to you to watch out what you fall down on.

Someone has done us a dirty trick. We had the forms down from the loft in advance so that they would be ready for putting on the carts, but some person unknown has sawn the legs off knowingly and carted them off for firewood no one knows why and it is no consolation when a trustee says "Now I know what they mean by the lowest form of Whit." Mr. Tingle says the singing is a bawling. Those who

know how to keep time can't and those who don't won't, but time and Whitsuntide waits for nobody so what is not done now cannot be undone.

The Parks Committee on which Mr. Tingle sits are standing firm on the lake question. No bathing is to be entertained at all and whether the children do it intentionally in costume or accidentally not is beside the point and it is now a sore point with the committee as they are sick of sitting on it year after year.

If some of the helpers can bring knives it will be a great help, as we have so many new scholars and it has always been our experience that the new ones do nothing they are told till they have learnt how the older ones get away with it. Anything anybody brings is at their own risk, but our thanks will go with it.

J. TINGLE, *Leader.*

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Professional Candour

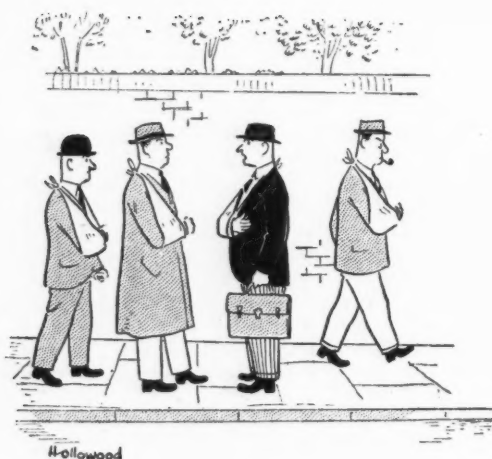
"SOLICITOR (30), ineligible, seeks situation, not necessarily legal."—*Advertisement.*

"THEY ALSO SERVE"

THEY are brave, these people who, behind the scenes, whether at home or in the factories, go quietly about their essential tasks. Even when they are bombed and lose their homes and cherished possessions, their grateful appreciation of the help given them through the PUNCH COMFORTS FUND proclaims the spirit which cannot be broken.

The privilege of service to them is extended to you. If you have helped us with contributions before will you please help us again? If this is your first introduction to the Fund will you please become a subscriber? Donations will be gratefully acknowledged by Mr. Punch at PUNCH COMFORTS FUND, 10 Bouverie St., London, E.C.4.

Registered under the War Charities Act, 1940



"Did you hear that remarkable mistake in this morning's 'Daily Dozen' programme?"

Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

An Englishwoman in Kharkov

THESE letters (*I Married a Russian. Letters from Kharkov. Edited by Lucie Street. ALLEN AND UNWIN, 12/6*) have the peculiar reality of an experience which has been lived through, not merely looked at from the outside, and should therefore be of great interest to English readers, whose knowledge of contemporary Russia derives for the most part from the impressions of special correspondents. The writer, Eddie, is an Englishwoman who met a young Russian scientist, Kira, at Cambridge in 1930, and married him a few weeks later. They set off for Russia at once, and during the next eighteen months Eddie wrote regularly and at length to her sister in England. On reaching Kharkov, her husband's home, she described its unfinished state, a few magnificent new roads, many streets which were only dirt tracks, new houses going up, old houses on the verge of falling down. It was impossible to get arm-chairs and divans, and they had to content themselves with two little iron beds and plain wooden chairs; bugs were plentiful, food scarce and coal almost unprocurable. The country was passing through the ordeal of the First Five Years Plan, and though Eddie shared her husband's faith in Russia's future, she had moods of intense depression, in one of which she wrote "Such a country of promise and yet I'm plain homesick for England. Your morbid Eddie." At the beginning of 1932 she managed, after many difficulties over her passport, to get back to England for a few months, and when she landed at Harwich "turned straight to her mother, put her head on her shoulder and wept." Her letters home in 1932 and 1933 were lost, and her letters in 1934 show a change in tone, suggesting a diminution in the close sympathy which had hitherto existed between the two sisters. Life in Russia was now much easier, Eddie had become thoroughly Russian in outlook, her sister, recently married, had a husband who disapproved of Eddie's unEnglish frankness about her private affairs, and when Eddie came back on a second visit she did not

conceal her impatience with the lack of energy and purpose in English life. In the years leading up to the war Eddie's letters reflect the growing Russian mistrust of Germany in particular and Western Europe in general—"Never send us a Wodehouse, we can't stand him in Kharkov," she wrote in 1937. The war put an end to all correspondence until Hitler attacked Russia, and not much news has come through since, but at the end of 1942 Eddie was able to send a telegram from Kazan to say that she was there with her husband and children.

H. K.

Island Days' Entertainments

With two admirable volumes on Java to her credit Miss H. W. PONDER tops her trilogy with the most enchanting travel-book of the three. This describes adventurous voyages in trading ships of the Dutch Merchant Marine to remote islands *In Javanese Waters* (SEELEY SERVICE, 18/-), voyages ceasing just before the third of a sequence of conquerors descended on the unfortunate "small nations" of the Banda Sea. Massacred and exploited by Portugal, massacred and exploited by Holland, massacred and exploited by Japan, given (at the best) corrugated iron for nutmegs by the pertinacious apostolate of civilization, the natives of the archipelago aroused not only enthusiasm for their gifts but indignation for their wrongs. Every page of this perceptive, humane and delightful book stresses its writer's sense of the value of these unspoiled people. Work and play came naturally to them. Their joy in their crops, their fisheries, their boat-building, their pedigree ponies, was as keen as their pleasure in a ritual dance or a really gaudy cremation. A menacing volcanic background to many of these sunny foregrounds inspires some of the book's most dramatic history, together with scientific expeditions of such uncommon interest as a visit to the red, green and blue crater-lakes of (Javanese) Flores.

H. P. E.

Light (?) Verse (?)

If "poetry" be, as Arnold Bennett called it, a name of dread, "verse" is a name of confusion which is made twice confounded by the addition of the epithet "light." What is Verse? What is Light Verse? A Chinese student with an inquiring mind on these questions would find no easy answer in the latest anthology from this particular garden. *The English Book of Light Verse* (MACMILLAN, 7/6) wisely eschews definitions, but a glance through Mr. GUY BOAS's album makes it clear that his conception of "Light Verse" is not that of the *Oxford Book* on the one hand or of the many Books of Humorous Verse on the other. That is not to say that it may not be a wiser conception—as it is certainly a wider; perhaps "Minor Poetry" would have been a better title, though here again we require some new expression untrammelled by the sneer of "Minor" or the challenge of "Poetry." To the alternatives "Is light verse Edward Lear or Herrick? is it Harry Graham or Pope?" Mr. BOAS roundly—and perhaps rightly—answers "Both." His wide-flung net takes in a multitude of fishes, great and small, from Chaucer to several of Mr. Punch's more recent contributors—a school which has, as Mr. BOAS points out, further obscured the issue by wedding to the lightest of subjects a delicately perfected technique formerly reserved for "poetry." Of the resultant collection it may be said—as of all anthologies—that it contains many inevitable specimens, many incredible omissions and some few discoveries—notably perhaps Mr. Ian Serrailier's "St. Brendan and the Fishes." But are they all Verse? Are they all Light Verse? And there we are, back again where we started.

H. B.

As You Dislike It.

It was G. K. C.'s *Auberon Quin* who suggested that the heroic was the impossible, because the man who struck a lyre and said "Life is real, life is earnest" had to go away and support life by putting alien substances through a little hole in his head. Some writers of fiction stress the lyre, some the little hole. Miss MARY LAVIN belongs to the latter school. The eleven short stories that go to make up *The Long Ago* (MICHAEL JOSEPH, 9/6) portray men and women with that detached blend of curiosity and distaste which most of us keep for ants. Now and again they depict something arrestingly human—like *Lally* of "The Will." But *Lally*, one suspects, is only admirable that her relatives may seem more vile; and when *Lally's* creator can discover meanness in someone with a traditional rôle of great-heartedness—like the parish priest in "A Wet Day" and the farmer in "The Haymaking"—she is aroused to a vivacity which mere ignorance—the theme of "Sunday Brings Sunday" and "The Young Girls"—fails to inspire. Her engrossment with mental morbidity and physical corruption is outstanding, and apart from the deft touch with which she indicates every human ill from hysteria to chilblains, there is little here to attract.

H. P. E.

Parts of Barbary

Parts of Barbary (HUTCHINSON, 21/-) is a travel-book based on a number of journeys in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. In an appendix the author, Mr. ALAN HOUGHTON BRODRICK, gives a list of "a few of the books to which I am personally indebted." The list has over eighty titles, and includes works in French, Spanish, English and German. That Mr. BRODRICK's erudition is genuine the reader of his book will be fully, if not painfully, aware long before he reaches the end. There appears to be nothing about the history and the customs of the inhabitants of North Africa which Mr. BRODRICK does not know and is not willing to communicate, and what books have not taught him he has acquired from personal observation. At one moment he is explaining the development of Sufism, and vivifying his account of Moslem mysticism with a picture of the *zawia* at El-Hamel and its saintly marabout. At the next he is on his way to the southern oases in order to study and copy the tattoo marking on the Ouled-Nail women. He has an eye for scenic effects—"The valley and the near hillsides are covered with carpets of wild flowers, blue and mauve, orange and scarlet, while the more distant heights stand out a delicate pistachio green." He is a connoisseur of food and wine—"The best meat is lamb. When it is well prepared a Barbary *meshawi* can be very appetizing"—"You never eat a *risotto* in France that tastes as good as it does at Biffi's in Milan." He has decided views on French and English administration of subject peoples. He is versed in Hispano-Moresque art. He knows that "the really comfortable hotels are generally in narrow streets." The total effect of so much knowledge about so many things is rather to bewilder than to illuminate the reader, but if he is content to dip into the book here and there he will find much of incidental interest. There is, for example, Mr. BRODRICK's account of the Sultan Mulay Ismail. "A fine figure of a man with a soft look in his eyes," he never let a day pass without killing a few persons, and at an advanced age could jump on a horse and simultaneously decapitate the slave who was holding the stirrup. "Mulay Ismail," Mr. BRODRICK writes, "may be reckoned with Louis XIV of France and K'ang Hsi of China one of the greatest sovereigns of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries."

H. K.

Family Album

Miss RICHMAL CROMPTON can always be relied on to introduce us to people as real as life and yet with that touch of "difference" that makes them as exciting to meet as are newcomers to a rather stodgy village. This time she begins her book, *Weatherley Parade* (MACMILLAN, 8/6), with a father's homecoming after the Boer War and we are shown the young *Weatherleys* as children, hinting broadly of what they are to be in 1940 when the book ends. *Anthea* is a petulant pet, *Billy* a darling and *Clive* a painstaking and painful prig who does everything with the best intentions and the worst results. We watch him through his school and school-mastering days, reporting his best friend, never turning the blind eye and playing the game (including the matrimonial one) in the best and beastliest way and with the worst results. But because Miss CROMPTON can never be too unkind she allows his better qualities to rally in a daughter and lets him be blitzed among his fossils. The children of the young people we met at the beginning are more fierce and interesting and alive than their parents, for the author has introduced a healthy revolution into her plan of family life and ends hopefully and with understanding. The book is well worth reading not only as a story but as a tract for modern times.

B. E. B.

Mr. Punch welcomes the publication of *Rhyme the Rudder* (BRITISH AUTHORS' PRESS, 5/-), a collection of verses by G. D. MARTINEAU, many of which have appeared in these pages.



"I still think Sergeant Edwards' early stuff is his best."



Toller Reports

To O.C. B Sqn.

I SUBMIT herewith as required a report on the mouseholing exercise undertaken by 5 and 6 Troops on detachment under my command. I regret that no officer taking part had actual experience of the exact drill involved, but would point out that Cpl Clegg has recently attended a battle course during which an afternoon was devoted to mouseholing and the exercise in question was based on his recollection of what happened; this, however, not being remembered in entire detail as Cpl Clegg unfortunately was rendered deaf from an explosion following the opening of a door of a deserted house, and partially blind as the result of another explosion when Cpl Clegg trod on a loose plank which flew up and hit him in the face. It was nevertheless decided that, as a likely feature of Second Front

fighting, the detachment would be failing in its duty if the operation were not practised, it being accordingly arranged that 5 Tp should mousehole against 6 Tp in a block of buildings in the detachment area evacuated after bombing.

I regret that leave was not actually obtained for the use of these buildings as it was considered they were of no further value as dwellings and that any additional destruction from mouseholing operations would merely assist dismantling prior to rebuilding, since it was not then intended to employ explosions of the strength referred to which occurred as the result of an error in making up the explosive charges, this leading to the bricks and slates concerned unfortunately flying into inhabited gardens and in one case through a bathroom window although without injuring the occupant of the bath.

Proper supervision of the exercise, as initially organized by myself, fell down through an unforeseen circumstance as described below, so that mouseholing continued beyond the stage visualized, as a consequence becoming out of hand and resulting in a certain amount of mouseholing outside the area prescribed: it should, however, be emphasized that full apology was made on the spot by the party led by Sgt Pinhoe, who lost direction and mouseholed into an inhabited house where the family was at supper, and that, in fact, this family gave the party sandwiches and have made no complaint of the affair.

With regard to the incident causing me to lose control of the operation, this occurred while I was on a lone mouseholing reconnaissance several houses away from the main party, so that when I mouseholed through a bombed kitchen and trod in error on

the broken cover of a well my warning cry was not heard by Sgt Pinhoe, I further not having time to blow three blasts on a whistle which was the signal for assistance.

Since the well appeared, as I passed down it, approximately 25 feet deep with an additional 2 feet of mud at the bottom which unfortunately at first clogged the whistle in my battle-dress trouser pocket, I was unable to attract attention for the space of two hours, and this was only by good fortune since a thunderflash thrown by Cpl Clegg, who was conducting a fierce imaginary engagement with German snipers in the house above, fell down the well and exploded six feet above my head making a curious subterranean explosion which drew his attention to the existence of the well, I then being able to send up signals in morse on the whistle acquainting him of my situation. It was at this time that I suffered the injury to my hands through burning, as the morse signals were to begin with misread to imply that I was a member of 6 Tp, a further thunderflash accordingly being thrown down by Cpl Clegg in the heat of the battle, this landing in my lap as I sat on a disused bucket and going off before I had opportunity of dipping it in water.

Every effort was made by myself to terminate immediately the mouse-holing exercise which I had suspected from various sounds to be proceeding beyond the point ordered, several dislodged bricks having fallen down the well during my occupation of it and a number of over-loud explosions having penetrated below ground and shaken the structure of the well, so that I was on one occasion afraid of it collapsing and attempted to climb up the sides but slipped on a toad living in a cranny, this attempt not being repeated as it led to the temporary loss of the whistle in the mud and I was reduced to sending cries up the well which echoed with a banshee quality so impairing morale—my first thought, in fact, on discovery by Cpl Clegg, being to transmit orders by morse for the immediate termination of mouseholing; and in this way additional time was lost due to the inability of Cpl Clegg to read morse accurately, a transcription of my messages being fluttered down on a piece of paper for checking and not coinciding with signals sent, Cpl Clegg having read the messages as a request for food and in fact departing for some time, after which he threw down a sausage roll, this further not being edible as it fell in the mud.

I regret the loss of the hook end of a tow-chain which was lowered to draw

me to the surface, this fouling a projection on the side of the well and becoming unhooked, I not being able to locate it in the mud as one side of the well bottom was deeper than the other and in fact appeared unfathomable, I having already stepped on this side and narrowly escaped becoming submerged. I also note instructions from Sqn Office that further mouse-holing will not be undertaken except by specific order from the Sqn Commander and have accordingly cancelled a voluntary mouseholing afternoon arranged for next Saturday in which the entire detachment had wished to take part. (Signed) J. TOLLER, Lt.

Home Forces.

Lady Addle's Domestic Front

Bengers, Herts, 1944

MY DEAR, DEAR READERS,
—How the very mention of herbs wafts one back over the centuries, to the days of pomades, balms, unguents—and even potions!

This last recalls a romantic story of my own family. The history really starts with the wife of the second Earl Coot, Lady Flora O'Flynn that was. Fey Flora she was called, and very lovely she must have been, by all accounts, with her long pale face and tall figure. (A picture of her, in shocking condition, used to hang in the hall at Coots Balder, called "The White Horse." It was recently cleaned and proved to be a portrait of Flora, Countess Coot.)

Anyway, she was very interested in spells and potions, having been, I believe, at a convent with Madame de Brinvilliers, and her diary of 1659 records the fact that she "cured her husband of the virtuous but melancholy habit of reciting the Book of Numbers in his sleepe by mixing a potion of horehound and pokeweed juice, together with a rare herbe knowne as bedsittiny."

Now comes the curious part. A brother of my father's, Uncle Iggy (Colonel the Hon. Ignatius Coot), developed the same strange inclination, especially after an evening spent at his club, when he would recite in his sleep, it is said, whole pages of Scott, or more frequently of Ruff's *Guide to the Turf*. It was this last that most troubled my aunt, who was somewhat strait-laced, and she resolved to try the potion which had been used by her husband's ancestress so successfully.

Unfortunately Uncle Iggy had been equally troubled by Aunt Katie's constant disapproval of his late nights, and accordingly had trained a parrot to recite, so that—in the dark—his absence from the bedroom would not be noted. And it happened that the fateful night of the potion—which she slipped into his "nightcap" without his knowledge—was also the fateful night when Uncle Iggy at last considered the parrot to be able to sustain his part.

Alas, for the best-laid of human plans! For some reason the bird—being perhaps a little nervous at his first performance—completely forgot himself, and instead of reciting Lord Shaftesbury's report on the sweated labour commission, uttered a shrill squawk and cried "Scratch a poll!" Poor Aunt Katie screamed loudly and lit a candle. There, shrouded in her husband's nightshirt, was a live parrot. What could she do but assume that she had used the wrong potion and transformed Uncle Iggy?—and for the rest of her life she continued to believe this and to treat her husband as an impostor.

I remember seeing Aunt Kate once when I was about ten: a gracious serene old lady, quietly reading the *Church Times* to the parrot, who was, apparently, a far more docile and receptive listener than my uncle had ever been. So the story has a happy ending.

There is indeed something almost magic about herbs, and before the war I used to have my own little herb-patch like any cottage woman, which I kept well stocked with rare and fragrant specimens by sending my head gardener on a month's tour of the herb specialists each year. I often used to send little packets or bottled tisanes, made from old recipes, to my friends for their ailments. Here are some of them:

False Mugflax and Sissiegrass. For flat feet.

The oil of *Giant Knight's Honour* with a little pounded *Shrift* (pluck your shrift as short as possible). For low spirits after flu or other setbacks.

Medico Bane (picturesquely known in Hertfordshire, from its flexible fronds, as *Doctor's Fingers*). Sovereign remedy for swollen ankles.

Dried *Aunt's Rue* mixed with distilled *Hassock*. For a gritty skin.

Tansy. For quinsy.

There are also of course many delightful herbs which can be used in cooking, besides the well-known varieties; especially *Common Dame*, which rears its head well above the height of a man; *Scribe's Prattle*, which likes to be planted in a shady

situation; and *Maiden's Padlock*, which is, however, very difficult to obtain and only has a short season. Sometimes I try making a soup of all the herbs in my garden—a sprig of each—which I chop up and boil into a bouillon. If it still lacks flavour and substance I add a little chutney or guava jelly.

Sad to say, some of these lovely things have had to make way for more useful commodities in war-time, and I have pulled up the whole of Abercorn and Grafton (I called each bed after a ducal friend and bordered it with strawberry leaves) to make way for woad, as I felt I could help my country by dyeing little things myself, and saving the overworked cleaners.

My first attempt, however, was somewhat marred by an untoward incident. I had mixed my woad—after several experiments—and taken up a basin full of the rich blue liquid to my bathroom, where I left it on the chair while I went to fetch some cushion covers which I thought needed a little refreshing in colour. Something delayed me, and on my return I found to my horror that Addle, for some unknown reason, had elected to go upstairs and change for dinner half an hour earlier than usual. Furthermore, he had, after his bath, suddenly adopted an old Turkish bath habit of sitting down with the evening paper. The result was very unlucky indeed, though I tried to comfort him by comparing him to the Ancient Britons. But Addle is strangely sensitive about some things. "Ancient baboon, you mean," I heard him mutter as he went in to his dressing-room, and

I left it at that, feeling the whole unfortunate business was perhaps something which only time could efface.

I forgot to mention, when discussing my herb garden, that Mipsie fervently believes in *Rapesbane* as a pick-me-up. Poor darling, she has sorely needed one lately, her health never having quite recovered from the shock of the fall of the South of France.

M. D.

Tales for the Dark Continent

JUST where the last houses of London look out over turnips and cabbages, and pavement ends and lanes and paths begin, lived Smithkin with his dream, which he once explained to me like this. "If all the money I've saved in four years on bananas and oranges, and other things we can't get, will run to it, I'm going to Central Africa for a couple of weeks when this war is over."

"What will you do when you get there?" I asked.

"Well that's the point," he said, "and it may sound rather a silly one; but the fact is, when I was a boy I always loved tales of adventure."

"Yes," I agreed, "most boys do."

"But I was desperate keen on them," said Smithkin; "so keen that I never really shook the taste for them off. And that's the trouble; I have got that taste still. It may seem silly, but

I expect you had it yourself once: well, I've got it still, that's all."

"Yes, I see," I said. "I don't see anything silly in it. Anyway, travel is a good thing, if you can afford it."

"Yes," he said. "You see, I've lived all my life in a suburb of London and I would like a bit of travel. But it is not that that I am going for. It is this silly craze of mine, and somehow I can't shake it off."

"And what kind of adventures are you going to look for in Africa?" I asked. "Big game?"

"Not adventures," he said. "Tales of adventure."

"Oh, I see," I said, as one very often does when conversation takes a turn that is a bit obscure. "I see."

"Yes, tales of adventure," he said.

"Well, I hope you'll hear some good ones," I said, perhaps a little doubtfully.

"Oh, it isn't to hear them that I'm going," he said.

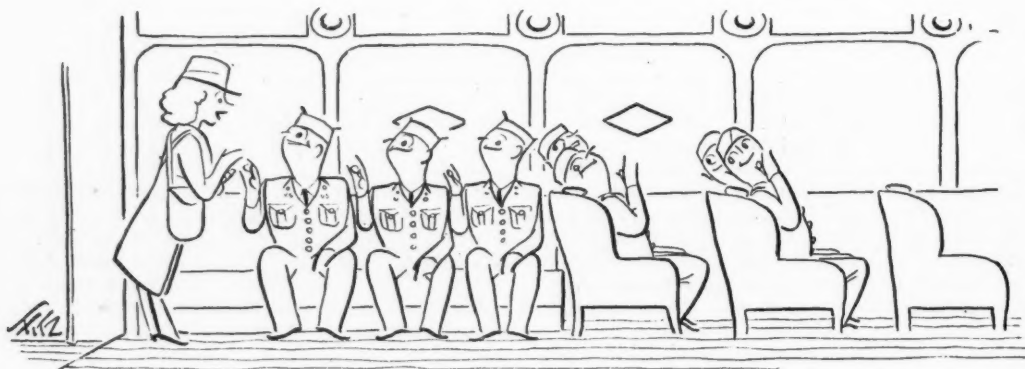
And, oddly enough, at the moment it didn't strike me what you could do with a tale if you didn't hear it, except read it, and that could be more easily done with the help of the post.

"No, I'm going to tell them," he said.

"But why do you have to go to Central Africa for that?" I asked.

"It's no good here," he said. "No, I've tried it. They've all had their own and won't listen, especially on this south-eastern side of London. No, I'm going to tell them in Central Africa. And I think I shall make them sit up."

ANON.

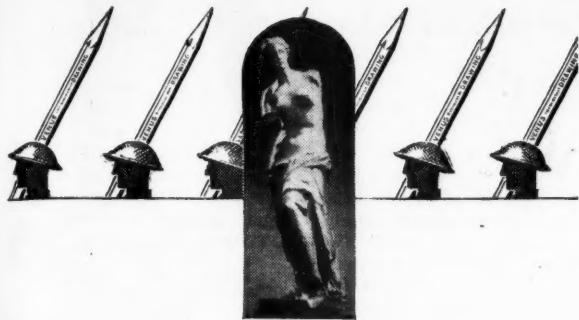


"To Seven Sisters, please."

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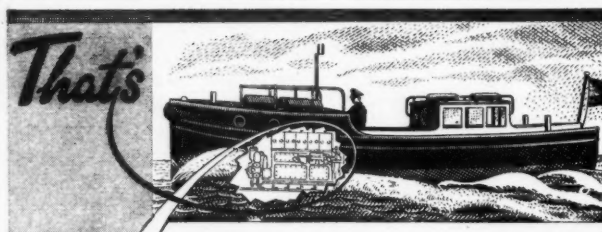
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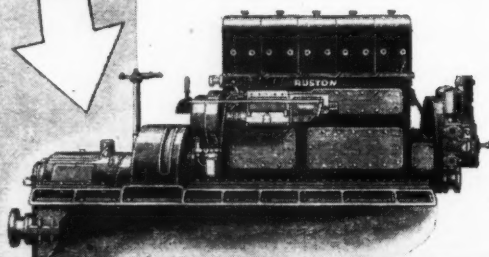
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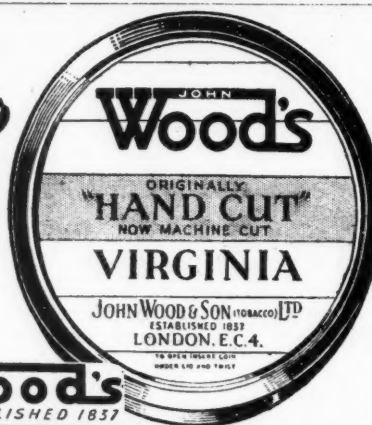
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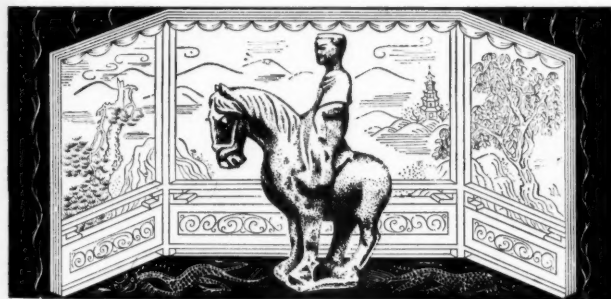


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[The original letter can be inspected.]

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